SPECIAL EDITION: Celebrating Thanksgiving, a Sephardic perspective

For Rabbi Sabato Morais (1823-1897), one of the most prominent orthodox Rabbis in 19th century America (see **this**), celebrating Thanksgiving was a no-brainer. In his view Thanksgiving is "a national holiday which connects Jewish people to their country and to their fellow Americans, irrespective of their creed." (D.H).
Thanks to Mr. Daniel Harari, a passionate student of Rabbi Sabato's works, and to Mr. Arthur Kiron, the Curator of Judaica Collections at the Penn Library, I got a copy of the original*"Sermon delivered on Thanksgiving Day, Nov 27th 1851 by the Rev. Sabato Morais, Minister of the Congregation Mikvé Israel Philadelphia"* which was published in the journal "The Asmonean" (□□□□□□□□). I'm presenting here some selected paragraphs of it and a link to the full article.

A Sermon delivered on Thanksgiving Day, Nov 27th 1851 by the Rev. Sabato Morais, Minister of the Congregation Mikvé Israel Philadelphia.
"…On the day which the inhabitants of this land have set apart to the Lord, let not Israel be found reluctant in responding to the religious call. True, we do not assemble to commemorate an event peculiar to us, yet, even as members of the house of Jacob, the present occasion must call forth our deepest feelings of gratitude toward God our benefactor….. Everything around us beams with joy: Nature, obedient to her creator has smiled on the earth, the fields teem with productions, no unpropitious rains destroy our plants, nor have the scorching rays of the sun blighted our fruits. The invaluable blessing of plenty has been showered on us and we and our children reap the benefits thereof. It is therefore to sing together in unison of voice and thoughts the praises of our merciful Father, that we have repaired to His holy mansion- to offer the sacrifice of a grateful heart, that we have foregone our daily occupations and flocked to his sacred altar…. A century

has nearly elapsed since the scattered children of Judah here found a home of security and peace; here they have thriven and acquired wealth; no internal adversary has ever molested them, nor has the rod of tyranny reached these shores; here they have but to prove themselves worthy and they will rise as high as any free man can aspire; no disabilities, no legal impediments militate against them; what felicity is that of which you are made to partake! Dear brethren, the boundless field of knowledge is unclosed to you, you may enter it, and freely gather its delightful fruits… unimpeded in the exercise of your religious duties, in accordance with Jewish doctrine, you are not merely tolerated, but regarded with respect; for you also form part of glorious whole that constitutes the American Republic."

"Sovereign of all ages [=□□□□ □□ □□□□□], *… bless this country, this people, their homes, their fields, their commerce, their productions; maintain among them harmony of feelings, indissoluble brotherhood, and unity of power, now and evermore. Bless all of them, of whatever nation or creed, who have this day like us gathered to thank thy abundant goodness… and over their old and young, over the rich and poor, over their wardens and officers, over their schools and teachers, unfold Oh God, the pavilion of thy peace, may their religious conduct and future progress in the path of true wisdom, shine brilliantly over America and on Israel thy chosen ones. Amen. "*

Read the full Thanksgiving Sermon of Rabbi Sabato Morais **here**

To read this article you will have to zoom it x 3. This copy is also very special because Rabbi Morais would publish his articles and "then correct them after publication as a keepsake in his ledger. The annotations in pencil are his own corrections." (D.H.)